

An interview with Mrs. T.V. Charlotte Corner
of 1127 Kensington Road, McLean, Virginia. Mrs.
Corner was one of the first teachers at the Franklin
Sherman School. She has been a resident of McLean
for over half a century. Interviewed by Steve
Matthews, on August 12, 1971.

Transcribed by:

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Steve Matthews: I am here today August 12, 1971 at the home of Mrs. Charlotte Corner at 1127 Kensington Road, McLean, Virginia. Mrs. Corner was instrumental in the opening of the Franklin Sherman School and she has been active in the McLean Community for half a century. This is Steve Matthews speaking. First, Mrs. Corner, I would like to ask you, can you tell us something about your parents? and where you were born?

Charlotte Corner: Well, I was born in Chicago and my father was born in New York City and his father was from England, Oxford, England. And that's where I'd like to go sometime. He was sent back to England to school when he was a child, and they were very strict. And I used to complain about studying Latin, how hard it was. He'd say, well he had to pick up Latin when he was nine years old.

S.M.: Oh my gosh.

C.C.: And then my mother was born in Lafayette, Indiana and her father was the first registered druggist in the state of Indiana. And he was from this Avery family that I said was, they were - the only Revolutionary War battle that was fought in Connecticut was fought on his ancestor's farm.

S.M.: My gosh.

C.C.: And there were thirteen that fought in the battle,

and , I think, nine were killed. And Benedict Arnold betrayed them and they wouldn't surrender, but they had to give up, that's where we have our reunions for the Avery family, up there.

S.M.: In Connecticut.

C.C.: And I was a twin.

S.M.: Well, what do you know.

C.C.: I started out in life rather, I was born prematurely and I had three older brothers and my parents were so happy to think they had a little girl and then when two came, well, they were just thrilled. But my twin sister was a blue baby and she only lived to be three days old. But the second day, my father was so excited about this having twins and they were so anxious to save this other twins life and he picked up a blanket and threw over the other twin and I was in the blanket and went sailin' off on the floor.

S.M.: Oh no.

C.C.: So my mother said that he was just almost beside himself, he said that if I was the one that died, he would have thought that he had killed me, but evidently I didn't have any ill effects from it and so I survived.

S.M.: You were born in Indiana?

C.C.: No, in Chicago.

S.M.: That's right you said Chicago.

C.C.: Uhum. He was with a banker for the manufacture firm of Calder-Bradley Manufacturing Co. Later on

Sears-Roebuck bought it.

S.M.: When did you come to this area?

C.C.: Well, I left Chicago when I was four years old.

S.M.: Oh, not very long.

C.C.: Yes. Then we moved to a place called Kankakee, Illinois, I don't know whether you've ever heard of it or not?

S.M.: Yes, I've heard of Kankakee.

C.C.: It was a family affair, the whole business and it in time you know how families deteriorate and everybody in the family had to have some office.

S.M.: Oh dear.

C.C.: Well, you know all about that. And then he finally got, well he retired, he bought a farm down here near Warrenton. And that's where I came to Virginia when I was about fourteen, so I've lived in Virginia most of my life.

S.M.: Yes, you have.

C.C.: But, later on there was another baby born, a little girl and she was six years younger than I was and she went to Farmville, the same school I did, then taught and she taught in a college up in Pennsylvania, at Clarion.

S.M.: Oh sure, I've been to Clarion.

C.C.: Have you been there?

S.M.: Yes. We went through there on the way to school.

C.C.: Well, she taught there for quite a good many years.

S.M.: In Warrenton, now. Did you live near Warrenton?

C.C.: Well, I always consider that my home. It wasn't right in Warrenton, it was between Warrenton and Culpeper, near the Rappahannock River, a place called Remington. I don't know whether you're familiar with the area down there.

S.M.: Yes, I'm familiar with it, that's Fauquier County isn't it?

C.C.: Yeah. So, Virginia suffered terribly from the Civil War and coming from the West where I really did have a good foundation in my grammar school. In fact when I graduated from eighth grade, I thought that I didn't really need anymore education, cause I had finished grammar and arithmetic and history and I just knew about everything there was to know. But, I found out I was mistaken and then I came down here and the schools were not good. Oh it was quite a change. And then none of us had never lived on a farm.

S.M.: Oh, that was a change.

C.C.: But we survived.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: Well, the schools in Remington, they had just opened up a new high school, but I was ahead of the highest grade there. And it just pretty near killed me to think of losing all that time, so I went down to Farmville.

S.M.: You entered . . .

C.C.: Well, it's hard for anybody to realize the condition

of education then. No, I only had one year of high school work when I went to Farmville. And, I graduated there in three years.

S.M.: Oh, gee.

C.C.: But, I don't approve of doin' that, I tell you I really did go after it.

S.M.: Sure, you must have. You must have been a go-getter.

C.C.: Do you know where Farmville is?

S.M.: Yes. That's Prince Edward County is it?

C.C.: Well, you know your history, pretty well.

So, they didn't have summer school then and I took more, they were lax then, I mean, if a person really wanted to get ahead, they could just shoot ahead, because there were not too many rules and regulations. Just, kind of if you get on the right side of the professor, one professor let me come to class without registering me. I took all the work, took the examination, but then I got credit for it but if I had been registered for it, I would have taken too many credits for the year. So that's the way I got my . . . and then my history professor said that I could study history at home during the summer and he gave me an examination, that's the way I got my credits there.

S.M.: Oh, my gosh.

C.C.: Now, my sister, she was only nine or ten years old when we went there to Remington and she went to school and she was supposed to go in fourth grade but she just took a seat in the fifth grade and that's where she

stayed. The schools were not well organized. You see in Virginia, in the South, it was a custom to send your children to private schools and it wasn't just the right thing for the public schools.

S.M.: They weren't particularly good therefore because . . .

C.C.: Oh no. And then nobody can realize how much the South suffered during the Civil War.

S.M.: There was still evidence at the time you came?

C.C.: Oh! You just couldn't realize the . . . and I know I visited a cousin of my mothers and she was a real daughter of the American Revolution and I was up there talking to her and I said somethin' about the Civil War and she said she doubted that there ever was a Civil War.

S.M.: Oh my gosh.

C.C.: And I said "If you lived where I did you would have known there was a Civil War." But you see when we fight our enemies now after we win why we turn around and put them back on their feet.

S.M.: That's it.

C.C.: But nothin' was done like that, the country was just desolate.

S.M.: Yeah. We're kind to the people that aren't close to us and then . . .

C.C.: Well, that was due to . . . I think if Lincoln had lived things would have been different. They had

a - you can't help but admire the people, because they had a strong character. And poverty didn't crush them. They just lost (she shakes her head), and well, I guess you don't want to hear all that.

S.M.: Where did you first teach?

C.C.: At Williamsburg.

S.M.: At Williamsburg.

C.C.: Yes, uhuh.

S.M.: And how soon after you left Farmville?

C.C.: Well, I graduated in 1911 and then went the following, let's see I graduated in June and went to Williamsburg in October, I think. The schools only had eight months, and some of 'em, many of 'em over the state only had five and six.

S.M.: Oh, my gosh. Five and six months and that was the school year.

C.C.: Uhuh. That was the school year.

S.M.: And you only taught in Williamsburg one year?

C.C.: Yes, uhuh. Well, no, there was a mistake made in some of these accounts, the next two years I taught up in the mountains.

S.M.: Where is this?

C.C.: It was in Giles County. Oh, it was rough. The only way I can think about it now is the Peace Corps going to these different countries. I was no more prepared for that kind of life, because they were mountain people. One of my friends up there said when the Lord

created heaven or earth, he made alot of very fine people and put 'em up in Giles County and then he got awful tired and just dumped the rest.

S.M.: (laughter)

C.C.: And there were just two classes of people up there, they were really the very fine, upper class, I guess you'd call 'em and then the - the mountain people are fine people, but you've got to understand them and of course, I think, things have changed now. But, I really just wasn't prepared for that kind of life. But, I just didn't understand them, I did understand them at the end of the school term, I only taught five months. And the reason I went up there, I wasn't proud of my work up there because my idea in going up there was just to earn enough money to get to Chicago or go to the University of Virginia. And I held onto that extra time, but I think that my salary was forty-five dollars a month.

S.M.: My gosh.

C.C.: And my board was ten dollars a month.

S.M.: That must have gone further than it would ever go today.

C.C.: Oh, there was no way of spending money at all.

S.M.: (laughter) They were isolated.

C.C.: You were just out in the - and the people after you got to know them and they were very fine , they're very loyal and very fine. But I didn't understand

toward the end of the school term why so many children quit. And I wasn't very diplomatic because I just didn't understand the conditions, but finally one woman told me, you know when they wear out their only pair of shoes that's the end, they can't go no more.

S.M.: Oh, my gosh.

C.C.: They have one pair of shoes and when they wear out well they just stay home.

S.M.: They're proud, very proud people.

C.C.: Oh they are, and they're very fine people. But, I just didn't - I wasn't prepared for it for that kind of - but I guess I did all right but I never thought that I did as much as I should have done.

S.M.: Did you go to school after that?

C.C.: Yes, I went to the University of Chicago. And, when I was in Farmville, I always said that I wanted to teach as near Washington as possible. And I had a friend that told me about this place here in McLean, but she said that she couldn't accept it and she wanted to know if I'd be interested in it, so I wrote to Mr. Sherman and I told-I'd be in Washington in the middle of the summer so he wrote and he said that he'd be very glad to have me come out and see him. So when I came to Washington- I had a funny experience coming to Washington. I was visiting some relatives in Evanston. Do you know where that is?

S.M.: That's in Illinois?

C.C.: Yes, north from Chicago. And I came to Washington

and I had a cousin that was very high in the government at that time, I was just young and I didn't know too much about it. He told me "Have you ever been to the White House" and I said "Oh yes, I've been to the White House." He said "Well, you take this card and go around to the office door" and he said "You'll see part of the White House that you haven't seen before and you'll meet President Wilson." And I just put the card in my pocketbook and one day I was driving downtown, I was in front of the White House and I thought well, I've got this ticket, I'll just get off and go in the White House. So I went around to the office door and showed them the ticket and the guard said "Well, come right in, President Wilson will meet you in about fifteen minutes." Well, so I waited and there were just about ten people there but one was a great big Indian Chief, he'd come to see his Great White Father. And I was so interested in this chief that I really wasn't too much interested in Wilson. (laughter) But the funny part about it was there was a couple there that I had met in Evanston, that was in that room at that time.

S.M.: Ah, coincidence.

C.C.: Wasn't that.

S.M.: That is something.

C.C.: So anyway, I met this president. There were two things - he didn't impress so much at that time, he seemed rather cold, but I think that was the way he looked. But I was too much interested in this Indian Chief. A week from that date the first Mrs. Wilson died. And I thought

that was . . . And of course the war had broken out just, we weren't in it, wasn't it in July, I think it was . . .

S.M.: I'm not sure of the month.

C.C.: Well, you don't remember (laughter)

S.M.: No I don't, definitely.

C.C.: Well, anyway, I think the war had just broken out but wars were something I didn't know much about then.

S.M.: Yeah.

C.C.: I was always having some contact in some way with Wilson. His first wife died in 1914 and then he later married Mrs. Gault.

S.M.: She's the one that gets all the publicity.

C.C.: Yes, and for some reason or another, I used, during that period Washington was more or less a country town. I didn't think too much of meeting all those people. It was just natural, we just took it for granted. I did have relatives, Mrs. Lansing was some relative of my mothers but I just didn't pay too much attention to all that.

S.M.: Is that Mrs. Lansing?

C.C.: Lansing was Secretary of State?

S.M.: Oh, I think it was.

C.C.: Yes, he was Secretary of State. I didn't think too much about all that. Well, anyway, I came out here to McLean. It was supposed to be Great Falls and I got on the electric railroad and I found out

that I had gotten on the Falls Church and the conductor was very nice and he said "Well, we'll just take you right back to the station and then you get on the Great Falls car. So I came up to Great Falls, I didn't get off at McLean, I got off at Spring Hill, that was the station. And then Mr. Sherman met me in a horse and buggy.

S.M.: Oh my gosh.

C.C.: Oh, there were no automobiles.

S.M.: No?

C.C.: None at all, maybe a few very wealthy people had automobiles. Well we didn't have the roads.

S.M.: No, I guess not.

C.C.: Well, anyway, then he took me over to his house and we talked awhile and he thought that as long as I was continuing my education that I might be all right for this job. So I got it, but then I had to wait and wait, the school building wasn't finished.

S.M.: That's the Franklin Sherman School?

C.C.: Yes. But it's almost impossible to explain to anybody the conditions then and now. McLean, was just a little rural village and the only reason there was anything here at all was because the railroad came up to Great Falls.

S.M.: That's the electric railroad?

C.C.: Yes. The electric road, it's now 123 (route).

And at that point they had to build a station. And the story goes that well what we going to name this place, it didn't have a name. And somebody suggested Englesides, and the post office said that it couldn't

be Englesides because there's an Englesides somewhere else in the state, so they said well, why don't you just call it McLean, he was the president of the railroad.

S.M.: That's where it comes from.

C.C.: John R. McLean, and he wasn't a very admirable character. And some people really objected to it very much, but there were just a very few people here. There was just one main street, Elm Street, you know where that is?

S.M.: Yes, I know where Elm Street is.

C.C.: Well, that was the main street, that's all there was to it, then there was a few houses up on Engleside and then all the rest was farmland, just farms.

S.M.: Almost impossible to imagine now.

C.C.: And the people in Langley, one family, the Mackall family had a home in Langley, but Mr. Mackall built a two houses here in McLean on Elm Street, one for his family and one for his wife's sister's family, because they could move up here in the wintertime to be near the car line. That road it was just a river of mud in the wintertime. So they had to move up here to McLean, this was their winter home, Langley was their summer home.

S.M.: Langley and Lewinsville both were settlements at that time?

C.C.: Oh, yeah. Langley was a very old settlement and so was Lewinsville and the little one-room schools were not closed up the first year, because the few people that

lived in that area didn't want to give up their one-room schools because they were afraid they might never have another school.

S.M.: They were concerned with the consolidated schools?

C.C.: The idea of the consolidated school was new. You know there's nothin' that hurts like a new idea.

S.M.: (laughter) So often that's true.

C.C.: They just couldn't see that consolidated school, that was a new idea.

S.M.: Sure. Was this 1914?

C.C.: Yes, 1914. And then another thing, there was tremendous opposition to having a school here because there weren't any children.

S.M.: That's a good reason to oppose it. (laughter)

C.C.: But, I taught here four years and I don't think that I had but one or two children that lived in McLean.

S.M.: My gosh. They all came from other places around.

C.C.: The first group that came down - it was the electric railroad that dictated what we would do, and when the children got beyond the fifth grade, why, then they came down here to McLean. But you see, all this had to be built up. It's just like tryin' to build up something that has no background to it.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: And we were taught, while I was at Farmville, the great cry that year or while I was down there was the school should be the community center. So I was just bursting with that idea that the school should be a

community center. But it took a long time, the school was delayed and we only had twenty-nine pupils the first day.

S.M.: For the whole school?

C.C.: Oh yes. There just weren't any children.

S.M.: Now what grades was this?

C.C.: Well, we had two teachers, a Miss Skelton and she had from the first to the sixth. Well, you see there weren't very many children. And then, I had from the seventh, well, only the seventh because nobody was any higher than that. And then every year, I just put another grade in, but after we got going we were always dragging because we didn't have enough teachers. We always started out with not enough of anything. Well, maybe I ought to tell you about the organization of school. We didn't have any central, we had a county superintendent, but he lived way down at Burke, I think it was. And he was quite old, and the county was big and I don't think I saw him but several times, the whole time I taught.

S.M.: Is that Mr. Hall?

C.C.: Yes. And don't know that I ought to say it, I was progressive and he was just ready to retire and I just couldn't hardly - well, I couldn't progress.

S.M.: He was a deterrent to progressive people.

C.C.: Yes. But then I never saw him so he never bothered me.

S.M.: That was some help.

C.C.: Yes. He was more of a politician, I think. But that is what we had. Then each district in Fairfax had its own little school board. We had Providence District here, and we had three members on the school board. One was Mr. Franklin Sherman, another was Franklin Williams, and one was Dallas Berry. And that was the school board. And we didn't have any contact with Fairfax at all, with any of the rest of the county. And to get from here even to Fairfax, well, I could go to Chicago quicker than I could go to Fairfax, back then.

S.M.: My gosh. That's unbelievable but I imagine that the roads were just so poor, then.

C.C.: Unless you were on the main line, I think, that the thing that built up McLean quickly was this electric railroad. I was tellin' you about the school board.

Mr. Sherman died the following January.

S.M.: In 1915.

C.C.: Yes, I think that was it, and Mr. Mackall took his place.

S.M.: Now, what is that, how do you spell that name? Mackall?

C.C.: M-A-C-K-A-L-L. And then the next year. oh well I told you about the organization of the . . . Can you imagine going to a school to teach when there were no, the only equipment you had was a broom and a box of chalk.

S.M.: That was all you had?

C.C.: It would be just like moving into a new house -

well, yes, we had the desk and a chair, but there were no shades at the windows. And for some reason or other I don't know why, all the ceilings in the homes all over Virginia were painted this midnight blue. It must have been a cheap paint, I don't know why that was. But, that's all we had and we had no electricity, no running water.

S.M.: What about heat, what did you do for heat?

C.C.: Well, we did have a central heating system, but it was up to me to get a janitor and just imagine me coming to a strange community and trying to find a janitor. One of the first things we had to do was to organize this school and Civic League. Because if you wanted anything there was nobody to ask for it, you had to get out and get it.

S.M.: It wouldn't help if you went to school board?

C.C.: You had nobody to go to. There was just nobody to go to, that's all. And there was quite a bit of opposition to building that great big building, and only using two rooms.

S.M.: Sure. I was going to ask about that, I wondered?

C.C.: Let's see, there were four rooms downstairs and two upstairs and then an auditorium. But, I thought the building was magnificent, because I had come from this old run-down one room school in Giles County with a stove that only had three legs and with the other one propped up on a block. And you had to depend on one of the boys gettin' there before you did to get the fire

started. But I don't know, that was just the way that they lived. But perhaps it was a little different with me because I had lived in the city most of my young life, and I had more advantages than this. And of course, when I came here I thought this was beautiful.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: But the sun would glare in there in the afternoon and one of the first things we had to do was to get some shades. But, where were we going to get the money. So we had to organize plays and put on entertainment and have suppers to get money. And then we organized this School and Civic League.

S.M.: Was that in 1915 that you did that?

C.C.: That was the first thing that we organized.

S.M.: The first thing, you had to.

C.C.: Really, we had wonderful people here in McLean, just marvelous, and we always have had. McLean's always been very progressive. But the work, I don't see how I stood it, but I guess you can stand a good many things when you're young. And then we were enthusiastic and we certainly had some wonderful people here. And so, we organized that School and Civic League and I don't how I would have survived. And then later on, the Masons organized, the Masonic Order, and they met in the school house on Monday nights. And the Baptist a few Baptists got together and they wanted to organize a church so they met in the school house on Sundays.

S.M.: So it did become a community center?

C.C.: Oh yes, There was just the one-room Episcopal Church, do you know anything about that?

S.M.: Not much. St John's Episcopal Church?

C.C.: Yes. Well, that's the church that I was in. I don't know how I would have survived without these organizations that helped. This old church was right next to the school house. Now, there were two other churches here in McLean, one was at Lewinsville and the other was at Langley.

S.M.: I see.

C.C.: There's a gas station there now. And then this is the rectory (she shows a picture).

S.M.: What street was this on?

C.C.: Well, that was on 123 (route).

S.M.: Yeah.

C.C.: This house is still there, but it's some kind of - I don't know what it is.

S.M.: Commercial though, isn't it?

C.C.: Yes. But, the people in the church were just marvelous, and they were very fine people. Some of our most prominent members came down from that country club area. You see this is the only Episcopal Church in this area. The minister up there was one of the first people I met in McLean, in fact I married his son-in-law. (laughter)

S.M.: Who was the minister there?

C.C.: Mr. Painter. But, we just had to work and organize and then we had this auditorium up there and we had - well, when we organized that School and Civic League,

it was just an empty auditorium. It was maybe as big as this whole floor down here. And we just had to sit on the stage and the first thing we had to do was to get some lamps and seats. We just had to start from scratch.

S.M.: And were you all the ones that organized the McLean Days?

C.C.: Yes, and then we organized the McLean Day and that went over big.

S.M.: Oh sure.

C.C.: And we gave plays, but you see it was the only thing that there was here.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: Everybody was working for that. But then there wasn't much money. Nobody had much money then, but it went much further than it does now. I bought shades and I wrote to Mr. McLean thinking that maybe he would make a donation, but I never heard from him. I did write to Mr. Lighter.

S.M.: Was he with the railroad also?

C.C.: No. Mr. Lighter lived down on the river, a very wealthy person and he, they had built a road from Georgetown to his home. Out where the roads, the government roads organization has that place now. Oh I forgot what they call the name of it. You know what I'm?

S.M.: I think so, down by the river.

C.C.: This Lighter Mansion was such a magnificent thing but of course, he called it his country home and he was

a very wealthy, you know Marshall Fields in Chicago, they have a magnificent store in Chicago. And I think Lighter was one of his partners. Well, anyway he sent me ten dollars and I bought two pictures for the wall because that ceiling was so ugly. And we finally got some new shades but, it was really a twenty-four hour job, I didn't do anything but just work for that school and sleep and eat when I had to.

S.M.: You taught there for four years?

C.C.: Yes.

S.M.: Until you were married?

C.C.: Yes, four years. Where was I?

S.M.: With the Civic . . .

C.C.: Oh yes, Well, we organized that and then we had plays every. We had a play every month.

S.M.: Every month.

C.C.: Yes. And we finally got through that first year. Oh, and then another thing the grounds were just as they were left from the building. And the boys used to bring shovels and rakes and things and they leveled off the ground and planted trees.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: But, I will say that the four years I was there, I never had one problem in discipline, I never had one act of vandalism. I think there was a window broken, or something broken once, but it was an accident.

S.M.: That's unbelievable, that's great though.

C.C.

They had to work hard to get those things, and when you work hard to get 'em, your not going to destroy them.

S.M.: That's true. Do you remember some of your pupils that you had?

C.C.: Oh yes. In fact I had a class reunion last month. They were a good class of children. One girl that I had was so smart that I thought, her papers were so perfect that she probably couldn't have written them. But it was continuous always and she was really a secretary to me, cause I had to teach all day long and then after that, I organized this library and then I was a librarian for two hours after that. And then I'd come home and eat supper and probably go back to plan for entertainment or somethin'.

S.M.: You just didn't have any time at all.

C.C.: Well, there was really nothing much to do. On Saturday, I always used to go in town. I will say that the transportation was wonderful.

S.M.: What ever happened to the electric railroads?

C.C.: Well, after the automobile came in, that died out. But, we had a church: a church at Lewinsville and one at Langley. But the attendance at any of these churches I don't suppose we ever had more than , and the Episcopal Church was easy to get to, but I don't think we had much more that thirty or forty people in the congregation. And I used to go up to Lewinsville, in the afternoon, 'cause the ministers wouldn't come every Sunday, maybe every other Sunday and it would be in

the afternoon. And I don't know how many times there were just five or six people and the same way down at Langley.

S.M.: And these were all Episcopal churches?

C.C.: No, the Presbyterian Church was at Lewinsville and the Methodist Church was down at Langley. But, they all worked together, but you just couldn't get to Lewinsville. You couldn't get to Langley, just rivers of mud.

S.M.: Well, you came in just after the school was opened? The Franklin Sherman School?

C.C.: Well, I opened it.

S.M.: Yeah. Now, you must have been able to set your own curriculum and how you were going to run the school?

C.C.: Oh, yes. I saw one of my former teachers the other day, and somebody said what kind of a teacher was Miss Troughton. She said she was all right, she never bothered us. (laughter) So in a way, I think, the teachers were dedicated and they certainly couldn't have taught for the money, because I don't think I got but fifty dollars a month for eight months, and the others got maybe forty-five or six.

S.M.: That's not very much.

C.C.: So, a teacher didn't get that much.

S.M.: I think we did have dedicated teachers, they were very interested in it. And another thing, the bright students went ahead at their own rate. I think maybe some of those ideas were very good.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: The individual developed just according to their capacity.

S.M.: Well, you had had experience with that yourself, so you knew the value of it, actually.

C.C.: I didn't realize that I did. Of course, things weren't crowded, we had plenty of room. And then we had tremendous help- the masons met there on Monday night and they were a tremendous help. And they bought, they had a lot right next to the school house, but they finally decided to sell that and move up to another place. And another thing, we were really noted in the state for being the first to have an incorporated School and Civic League. We incorporated that. And then, I think, after Mr. Mackall got on the school board, they wanted to bring children up here from Langley. So they had a school bus, but the school bus was an old Model T Ford and the children just climbed on that Ford, just like bees around a hive. If they could get in well all right, if they didn't they'd just hang on the outside. (laughter) And that was the first school bus in the state of Virginia.

S.M.: Oh, I didn't know that. That's the way they got to Franklin Sherman School from Langley?

C.C.: Yes. They came up from Langley.

S.M.: Did you have any children come to school on the electric train?

C.C.: Oh yes, it started out that way. There was a group that came down from Chesterbrook and from Spring Hill.

But the reason I didn't have but one or two children from McLean was because nobody lived much in McLean. I have a picture of it, (the class) They all have done very well. This boy has turned into a very successful lawyer.

S.M.: Who is he, now?

C.C.: Harmon Swink, he's retired now.

S.M.: Yeah, he still lives in the area, doesn't he?

C.C.: Yes, he lives down here in Arlington. Well, they were nice children, this girl was a pretty good musician. And this one has beautiful gray eyes, she and her husband have a beautiful farm up on Lee Highway I guess.

S.M.: Who is she?

C.C.: She was Elizabeth Wilkers(?) and she married an Oswald Carper. I'm sorry that it's cut off. This is a bright little boy.

S.M.: Who's that?

C.C.: I've forgotten what his name is. And this girl, she was a Gantt from Langley. It was her house that Dolly Madison, her ancestors' home, where Dolly Madison stopped when she came to Virginia.

S.M.: Salona?

C.C.: No, it was at the Gantt farm. It was down here at the top of Chain Bridge Road.

S.M.: Oh I see.

C.C.: I'm going to send this picture to one of these students, but it's hard for anybody in this age to realize, but we had a good time. I think about all the things

that people have to have now, and you don't really have to have so much.

S.M.: It looks that way sometimes.

C.C.: Of course, there's so many more people now and then gradually all this land around here - the farms were sold.

S.M.: Well, you've watched McLean grow up, actually.

C.C.: Oh my, yes.

S.M.: All of it just kind of developed.

C.C.: Oh yes. But everybody knew everybody else. And really going in on that electric train was just kind of a social event, because you just knew everybody on it. And the transportation, really was good. And Georgetown was our home town. I mean we didn't have anything - we had one store in McLean, right at the crossroad and you could buy a few groceries there and the post office was in one corner, but you couldn't buy any thread. I know if I wanted a spool of thread I had to go to Georgetown. Georgetown was our home town. Now, you could never get to Falls Church. You'd have to go all the way to Georgetown and take another streetcar to Falls Church.

S.M.: The roads were impassable?

C.C.: We did have a county fair and the school children had to march. And the only way we could get up to Fairfax was to get a team of horses and , it wasn't a hay wagon. It was just a wagon with sides. What kind of a wagon is that?

S.M.: I don't know.

C.C.: You know it's hard to think about these things.

S.M.: I'm not that familiar with wagons.

C.C.: Well, it was enclosed. We just put straw in the bottom of it and we had one of the farmers around here furnish the horses and team to take the children up there to the fair grounds. And they participated in that program whatever it was.

S.M.: It was a county fair for . . .

C.C.: Yes, going up to Fairfax was really quite a . . .

It was a days journey to go up there and back again. One time, we had a teachers meeting in Alexandria, and I didn't know how we were going to get there, so one of the farmers here lent us his horse and buggy and we drove over to Alexandria, but that was an all day trip.

S.M.: Oh my gosh. It took you all day to get to Alexandria.

C.C.: Oh, it took all day long. Georgetown was very accessible, we could get to Georgetown. That's where we did our banking and got our groceries. And when I was in town, every year there were a few more automobiles. I'll never forget when 123 was macadamized, but before there was all those rough rocks, you had to use the road anyway, no matter what condition it was in. And those terrible rocks and all that drive to Langley was just agony.

S.M.: About when was it macadamized?

C.C.: Well, maybe 1917. Along about that time. I've got to tell you about Wilson's election, this would be his second term, in 1916 was it. Well, we thought it

would be so nice to have a meeting in the school house, and have a special phone put in, cause we didn't have any phone. So, someway we had a phone put in the building and we went there election night. And every once and awhile maybe every half hour or smething, why, the returns would come in. Let's see this was Wilson and Hughes. And we waited and waited, of course, it took a long time to get the returns from, we didn't get the returns from California, that was too late. But by the time that we couldn't stay there any longer, I guess about midnight, it was decided that Hughes was elected.

S.M.: Oh my gosh.

C.C.: The telephone message came in and Hughes was elected. Well, that pleased the Republicans very much and this Mr. Mackall was a very staunch Democrat. And several of the men, I didn't know anything about this till the next day, but several of the men went down and draped the entrance to his home in black crepe.

S.M.: (laughter)

C.C.: to console him. And then of course, the next morning the report came in that Wilson was re-elected so the tables turned again.

S.M.: Well, that brings up the subject of politics, was there alot of political activity in McLean at that time?

C.C.: Why yes, we had prominent people here. In fact, one member of the church was one of the commissioners of

Washington. Washington was governed by three men. There were prominent Washington people. I'll tell you, lots of the Georgetown residents used to have country homes out here. So they were interested, in fact, I guess they originally came from this area. Yes, we had some very prominent people here in McLean.

S.M.: What about county politics? What were they like?

C.C.: Oh well, I guess they were dead.

S.M.: Not much happened.

C.C.: No. But they were very fine people. I could go up to the court house, if I needed any. Later on after my husband died, I went up there to settle his estate and oh, the commissioners and everybody was just wonderful. They were just wonderful. If I would go up there now, I'd just be in a strange country. I mean nobody would know you. And then there was R. Walton Moore (Z), he lived in Fairfax. He was very interested in McLean.

S.M.: Who was this now?

C.C.: R. Walton Moore. And he was in Congress.

S.M.: From Virginia?

C.C.: Congressman from this area. And there was another family here, a Ball family, that was very active. Stuart Ball was the first president of the . . . well, his mother, no . . . they were direct descendants of George Washington's mother. They were a very prominent family, and his father I think, was appointed the Territorial Governor of Alaska,

when we first bought Alaska. I think that's right, I'm not - anyway they lived up there for awhile.

S.M.: In Alaska?

C.C.: Yeah. They were prominent people. Now, if you want to get off on other subjects, Salona, here was very prominent.

S.M.: You taught then to 1918. Did you meet your husband in McLean?

C.C.: I met him at the church door. (laughter)

S.M.: That was Mr. Painter's . . .

C.C.: His first wife was Mr. Painter's daughter and she died, soon after I came here. But the Painters were very - it was the Episcopal Church but he was the only minister in the neighborhood, he just wasn't strongly denominational. I mean he was just wonderful to everybody, and he was very much loved. And another thing, he was a full-time minister. He was the first full-time minister. He just went wherever he was needed regardless of where he was called.

S.M.: Sure.

C.C.: Then, he died in 1916, I think, or '17. Well, I've forgotten just when he died. But the church was a strong backer of everything we did in the school. There were two things that I would think that I did put into the school. The first day we opened, we raised the flag and tried to sing the Star Spangled Banner but we broke down before we finished it. We just couldn't get through it. I thought well, if I can possibly do it, I'm going

to have some music taught in this school. So, I think, within in a year or two, I did get a music teacher, but we had to pay her. We had to earn the money and pay her.

S.M.: Do you remember who the music teacher was?

C.C.: Yes, it was Mrs. Walker, from Herndon. Oh she came down and then she would give private lessons after school. So we also had a religious education teacher, which of course wouldn't be permissible now.

S.M.: Who was this?

C.C.: Well, she came from up, I've forgotten what her name was, but she came from Arlington. We had it in the sixth grade.

S.M.: It was just in the sixth grade that you had religion.

C.C.: I think it was, sixth and seventh.

S.M.: And what did she - was it catechism?

C.C.: Well, she just taught the history of the Bible, it was undenominational, but I don't think we had any Catholics in the community, at all. I just don't remember. But anyway, there was absolutely no objection to it, everybody was very enthusiastic about that. And she was a good teacher.

S.M.: Now, were there any black children in McLean?

C.C.: Oh my no.

S.M.: None.

C.C.: We did have, we have always had some very fine black families here. They have a little settlement up here at - out here on Lewinsville Road.

S.M.: Odrick's Corner, is that it?

C.C.: Yeah, Odrick's Corner. And had one of the women who came to clean the house, she taught me everything I knew about housekeeping, (laughter) But they were very fine, they were good people. They were very good people. I see some of the grandchildren now. I tell you alot of the colored people had inherited land from their owners, and they were good; they were very fine people. They really were, but then at that time you had the separate schools. They had little school up there, I guess. And you know even now, we don't have enough black people in our area too much. The ones we have are very good, they're very fine. I just think alot of some of 'em. I have one man that comes here and works for me and I just think alot of him.

S.M.: You retired in 1918, you were married, not retired but you stopped teaching?

C.C.: Yes, well, at that time married women were not supposed to work.

S.M.: Oh, I see that was the . . .

C.C.: I didn't want to anyway and then I tell you the war came on. I was married during wartime. And during that war everybody was very enthusiastic, we were going over there and beat up the Germans and that was going to end wars forever. No more wars, and everybody was very enthusiastic. No, I think the school went down rapidly after that because of these people - the war disorganized everything. And then that next year, the first Christmas after that, the bodies of the soldiers

were being - coming back to Arlington and they were just being piled up over there. I used to go over there, they were just piled up one on top of another. Oh, it was just pathetic.

S.M.: Was that to be buried in the cemetery?

C.C.: They were buried in the Arlington. And then on top of that we had that awful outbreak of flu. And there really weren't enough coffins. You couldn't bury people cause they didn't have enough coffins.

S.M.: My gosh. The epidemis was that bad?

C.C.: Oh, that was just awful.

S.M.: When was this, in 1918?

C.C.: That was in the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919. And of course the school - everything was disorganized. That was really just awful. And every time I got a letter I'd hear of somebody. My mother got a letter from a little girl down near where we lived, and she said, it was Christmas- she wrote it on Christmas Day. She said "We are all well, but mother died this morning." And there were not enough doctors, there were not enough nurses, there were not enough coffins. I know in my family, my mother - I wasn't married but two or three months before I had a family of five. My husband had a son about five years old, I think he was seven. My father had died and he had to sell the farm and my mother and sister came up to visit us. And everybody - my husband had the flu and his mother came over from Annapolis to look after him. My sister had the flu

and my mother looked after her. And the little boy had the flu and I looked after him. That really was just awful.

S.M.: Did you live in McLean at that time?

C.C.: Yes, I always lived right over- I still own my house on Elm Street, right across from the post office, but I rent it out as an office building. But it's not a good business proposition at all, cause the taxes and upkeep is just awful.

S.M.: Yes, anywhere in the county.

C.C.: Yes, it's not an asset at all. Until I sell it. Well, I always lived on that street, then I came over here when it got too much traffic over there. We were out in the woods here and then they cut down every tree and put up townhouses.

S.M.: There's no escaping. (laughter)

C.C.: I've always thought McLean was a wonderful place to live. I've had wonderful advantages, and I used to go into Washington a great deal and I have had some really wonderful experiences. I was with Mrs. Roosevelt when her husband died. I was- used to be active in some charity organizations in Washington. And this Thrift Shop Tea was given at the Sulgrave Club.

S.M.: What is this?

C.C.: Sulgrave Club.

S.M.: I went in town and I was going to that. Well, in the morning I went to the Corcoran Art Gallery and one of my boys had put some kind of hook on the end of the car, to hook a trailer to, I guess. I left the

Corcoran Art Gallery and I must have backed up a little bit, as I hooked the car in back of me. But I didn't realize it, and I was going across Pennsylvania Avenue and a policeman stopped me and I didn't know what was the matter. And I thought that I was trailin' this car along there. Well, I finally got that straightened out and by the time that I got over to the Sulgrave Club, there was no place to park. So it took me quite a long time to park, well, I finally found a parking place and then I went in and when I went in Mrs. Roosevelt was talking. She was always at every organization, and she was talking. And the place was so crowded that I couldn't get into the main room. That's in an old home and I was in the middle of this big hallway. And I was there as you go up to the telephone and the hostess said - Mrs. Roosevelt had finished and somebody else was talking. The hostess stopped and she said that she was sorry to break into the program but the White House was calling Mrs. Roosevelt. And I was sitting almost as near the telephone as I am to that mirror over there.

S.M.: About eight or nine feet?

C.C.: Uhum. And she answered the phone and she went back and talked to the hostess and she said that she would like to be excused, because she was called back to the White House. And I didn't think anything about it, but we had the reception, everything was very elaborate then. We had the tea, and then I came home.

And I was sitting on the porch and one of the neighbors girls went by and said "Roosevelt just died this afternoon." And my daughter said "Why he did not, my mother just saw Mrs. Roosevelt." I said well Charlotte - the girl said "Well, if you don't believe me go and turn on your television set." I said "Well Charlotte, maybe that was the message." I said "You better go and turn on the television."

S.M.: You had television at that time?

C.C.: Well, this was much later, Roosevelt.

S.M.: Yeah, 1945 or 46, I think.

C.C.: Yes, so we turned on the radio. He had died while we were there. Up until the Second World War, it was kind of a friendly country place. I mean you didn't think anything about meeting or seeing officials.

S.M.: And you weren't worried about crime and things like that?

C.C.: Oh, my goodness no. There was just nothin' like that.

S.M.: Well, you lived in McLean during the Depression, didn't you? What were things like here, did that effect this area very much?

C.C.: Oh! That was agony. It wasn't so much the Depression as it was my husband died very suddenly in 1936. And just two years before that, my daughter was just two months old, our house burned down. For some reason or other, we did have insurance on the house but the furniture had run out. So, we had all that to

go through. And then two years after that— Then we rebuilt, in a way I guess some good comes out of bad. Because we had so much trouble getting the insurance from that house, that he had bought the land across the street where my big house is now. And we built that house there, in the mean time, when we finally got the insurance, we built that house. Money went a long way then, so we rebuilt the house across the street. And before we had gotten the house that we lived in finished. Our idea was to get that other house finished to get the income from it, and that would pay off the expenses. So, we finally got that settled and then two years later, he died very suddenly on the way to the hospital, and I was left with almost three unfinished houses. And I didn't know a thing, I could hardly tell the difference between a screw and a nail.

S.M.: Oh no.

C.C.: Of course this came up later, my money that I paid in for the Teacher's Pension, that went bankrupt and I couldn't get anything out of that. And we didn't have any insurance on the furniture, that had run out. And his insurance, the firm that he was with went partially bankrupt. So, I tell you . . .

S.V.: Really quite a time.

C.C.: My step-son was grown then, but my oldest boy was only sixteen and the other was fourteen. And the school had gone down. Well, I did build it up into a two year

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high school. But then things were always changing and then they decided that they would have a consolidated high school at Fairfax. The years that they needed it, everything was just not- was very poor. So I sent them up to a private school up in Maryland. Children can't wait for an education, you've got to give it to them.

S.M.: You mentioned Mr. Hall, at the time, when you were teaching and principle. Do you remember when Mr. Hall retired and Mr. Woodson took over or was that after you . . .?

C.C.: I'll tell you, I think that was about 1928, I was very active because I helped organize the county PTA's. When I was first teaching, when I first started out, there was no PTA in Virginia at all. The only thing that would compare with it was this School and Civic League. But of course this was just a state organization, And when the PTA organization spread across the country, why the school became interested in that. But, I wasn't successful in organizing the county because we couldn't get anywhere. I did go up to Vienna because a friend and I organized one there. And I went up to Fairfax once to talk over the radio, but that's just like talking to a piece of furniture.

S.M.: You get no reaction.

C.C.: You get no reaction at all.

S.M.: This was in the twenties?

C.C.: Well, I guess it was in the late twenties.

S.M.: The late twenties.

C.C.: You couldn't do anything county wide until you got good roads.

S.M.: Right. I understand that Mr. Hall and Mr. Woodson at one point, were both acting as superintendent.

C.C.: Well, I went down to Richmond, I used to go down to this convention down there and I told whoever was state superintendent, I've forgotten who it was, I said Mr Hall, I didn't have anything against him personally but I said "Your school in the county are definitely in need of leadership," and I said "We just don't have it," and I said "Please can't you do something to get us a new superintendent." And then Mr. Woodson came up here and then things began to . Mr. Hall was of the old school. I don't blame him, the conditions were such that you just couldn't.

S.M.: It was a changing environment.

C.C.: And until we could get roads and could get around, why you couldn't have anything. Now, I tell you, another thing that this school is responsible for. A member, Mr. Franklin Williams was elected to the state legislature, and he was the one that broke down this district school system, and organized county schools. This school has really had an effect on the state system, in many ways. Because it's been a leader in many areas.

S.M.: It looks that way.

C.C.: I think we really are responsible for breaking down that district school system, and having a county. But, you know, Fairfax County is a big county.

S.M.: It's massive.

C.C.: And it was not so much the individual, but it was just the circumstances. And McLean was cut off, we were cut off from the rest of the county in this area. And then, of course, our churches you know has wonderful leaders. I think we've organized five churches from this one. Well, we organized the church down at - the area near the country club. St. Mary's. Then we had one up here at - well I don't know, there were five. We helped to organize a church in Arlington County. I think we've had five.

S.M.: Well, as the area has grown, you've had need for that many more.

C.C.: Do you know where the church is now?

S.M.: Yes, I know where that is, the new one?

C.C.: Yes. It's been very active. I was very active in the church too. And in 1932, I think, it was during the Washington Bicentennial, and we thought that we'd open up Salona, which hadn't been opened - never. We thought we'd have a tea there, open that up and make it into a celebration.

S.M.: Is this the church group?

C.C.: Yes. Now where . . . oh this is it. Well, this is - you had to get prominent names to back you up but I don't know who was in - well those are the ones that - the patronesses. They were high official in the government at that time. And then we had - well, let's see. (she looks through her papers and books)

S.M.: But, you all got the home open?

C.C.: Yes, but before we had to open it we had to go over

there, I never will forget it, it was really a struggle, to get that place cleaned up. Well, this gives a little bit of it.

S.M.: Oh, I see.

C.C.: But, we got an awful lot of publicity. I was publicity chairman.

S.M.: This is the Guild of St. John's Church.

C.C.: We had this also written up in - have you seen old pictures of Fairfax. There's the . . .

S.M.: There's the court house and there's Salona and the old Gunnell mansion, that's in Fairfax too.

C.C.: Oh yes, Fairfax is really about as dead as Williamsburg and Alexandria. I don't know where that is. Anyway that was quite a big event..

S.M.: I guess it was.

C.C.: Well, I don't know. My material is not organized. I always think someday I'm going to get organized, but we had this special article - there it is. I think I have an extra copy of that. Now, what are you doing are you making a- are you in this for a thesis.

S.M.: No, this is just for the county.

C.C.: Well, are you employed by the county?

S.M.: Yes.

C.C.: Oh I see.

S.M.: The Commission is trying to preserve actual reminiscences of . . .

C.C.: Oh I see. Well, I tell you, other parts of the county haven't been quite as progressive as McLean has been. But, that may be due to our position here.

S.M.: There were quite a few families around here, the Magarities and the, you mentioned . . .

C.C.: The Mackalls.

S.M.: Mackalls yeah, I always mispronounce that.

C.C.: Mackall yes.

S.M.: And quite a few others, so it's been quite a prominent area.

C.C.: Yes. And the Ball family was very very active. The people that were here were really leaders. Not only here but in Washington as well.

S.M.: This community has been a suburban area in a sense for quite a long period of time although there wasn't subdivisions?

C.C.: No, it was really a country village.

S.M.: But, you had easy access to Washington so you could revolve around . . .

C.C.: Oh yes, We looked towards Washington because the rest of the county was impossible to get to, that was all.

S.M.: Yes, you were cut off by transportation.

C.C.: Especially at the beginning.

S.M.: Uhum.

C.C.: Well at Langley, they used to drive the cattle down a long time ago, they used to drive the cattle down from Leesburg to Washington. I think that they stopped at the Dranesville Tavern, that was one stop, and then they'd get the cattle as far as Langley and stop at the Langley Tavern. Then the next day they'd go on into Washington.

S.M.: Was that to go to the stockyards over there?

C.C.: I just heard people talk about it. That was long before my time.

S.M.: Well, you remember when the Chain Bridge was washed away, I imagine in '36?

C.C.: Yeah, we had an actual link from Chain Bridge at the opening of Salona.

S.M.: The original.

C.C.: Yes, from the original Chain Bridge. One of our members, Mr. Foster lives down in the country club. What do you call that area? I don't know what you call it, but it's just Arlington. Well, even then it wasn't called Arlington, it was called Alexandria.

S.M.: Alexandria County that was then.

C.C.: Yes.

S.M.: Was it 1921 that they changed the name back?

C.C.: I think it was later than that, but I guess. . . I just don't know. I thought I had an extra copy of that, that I could give to you.

S.M.: That would be really nice, we could make it a part of the . . .

C.C.: I know I've got one. Well, there's just so many . . . The Smoot family had lived here for a long time.

S.M.: The Smoots.

C.C.: Yes, they were the owners of Salona. Well, I'll find it.

S.M.: Okay. That's quite all right. I think I've gotten quite a bit of what . . .

C.C.: Well, you can just keep going on forever.

S.M.: That's true. You've been really quite a bit of help, and I appreciate it.

I Charlotte J. Corner, give my permission
for the interview in which I have participated on
August 12, 1971 in conjunction with the Fairfax
County History Commission's Oral History Program, to
become a part of the Oral History Collection and be made
readily available for the use of scholars, historians,
and other interested persons.

Charlotte J. Corner